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# BOOK REVIEWS

*Mental Fatigue.* By MAX OFFNER; translated by G. M. WHIPPLE. Warwick and York. Pp. vi+133.

This book is of the type of a number of works which have recently been written for the purpose of presenting in summary form for the convenience of teachers and educators the results of experimental investigations in a particular field which have a bearing upon educational practice. Of a similar nature are Watt's book on *Memory*, Heck's on *Formal Discipline*, Miss Thompson's on *Writing*, and Meumann's comprehensive work, which indeed includes all the fields which have been made the subject of investigation. Such books meet a very widespread demand and are evidence of the fruit which the new effort to apply the scientific method to the solution of educational problems is already bearing. The author of *Mental Fatigue* has presented a comprehensive and critical, and for the most part clear and concise, discussion of the literature of the subject. The interpretations and applications which follow the more technical presentation are given with due caution and reserve, and yet offer reasonably definite suggestions for practice.

After defining fatigue and drawing a distinction between mental and physical fatigue, the author discusses the various methods which have been tried for the measurement of fatigue. These are divided in general into physiological and psychological, according as the process which is tested is a physiological or a mental activity. The physiological methods assume that there is a close relationship between diminution in the capacity for physical and for mental work—sufficiently so that the degree of diminution in physical efficiency may be taken as a measure of mental fatigue. This relation has been found not to be so simple as was assumed, however, and resort has accordingly been had to the use of mental processes, such as the ability to discriminate between sensations or the speed and accuracy of computation, memory, etc., and it is upon the results of such tests that most of the conclusions are based.

In the next section the discussion deals mainly with the relation between fatigue and other factors in their effect upon the efficiency of work. The fluctuations in efficiency do not give a simple picture of the course of fatigue because of the effect of such factors as practice, "warming up," the initial and final spurt, etc. It is this complication which makes the testing of fatigue difficult. The author shows in this section the part which each of these factors may be expected to play.

Under the caption "Laws of Fatigue" are shown the course which fatigue itself may be expected to take, and the variations which occur in different persons and at different ages. This section also takes up in some detail the application of the principles of fatigue to the length of lesson periods, the length and distribution of pauses, longer and shorter, and to the fatigue effect of various studies and of various kinds and conditions of work. Finally in the last section certain general conclusions upon mental hygiene are drawn.

The book will be found of interest not only to teachers but to all as well who are concerned in the development of mental efficiency.

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